

# National College Learning Center Association 2014 Survey Report

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## **NCLCA 2014 Benchmarking Survey**

The material in this article is a compilation of the results of an NCLCA study conducted by Dr. Marcia Toms under the auspices of NC State University which came from 211 unique institutions during the Spring of 2014. Invitations to complete the survey were sent to all past and present NCLCA members as well as to national listservs. The survey questionnaire was based on previous NCLCA surveys and the Writing Center Research Project survey (Griffin, Keller, Pandey, Pedersen, & Skinner, n.d.; Truschel & Reedy, 2009).

The intent of this article is to provide a baseline for center administrators to use when assessing their operations. Additionally the outcomes have provided the association with topics of interest identified as a future trend by respondents. The survey and full breakdown of responses are available to NCLCA members at [www.NCLCA.org](http://www.NCLCA.org).

### **Location**

Learning centers were coded based on the state of their institution according to US Census Maps (U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d.). The largest percentage of responses came from the South and the Midwest (see Table 1).

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**Table 1**  
*Learning Centers by Region*

Region	Sub-region	Number of Learning Centers
Midwest	East North Central	42
	West North Central	17
North East	New England	11
	Middle Atlantic	37
South	East South Central	11
	South Atlantic	44
	West South Central	26
West	Pacific	14
	Mountain	11
Canada		3

**Institution Type**

Next, the responses were divided by Carnegie classification (Center for Postsecondary Research, n.d.).

**Table 2**  
*Learning Centers by Institution and Funding Type*

Institution Type	Public	Private	For Profit
2-year	60	1	1
4 year liberal arts	13	36	
4-year comprehensive	23	12	2
4-year research	38	3	1
Other	2	4	

**Age of Learning Center**

While two of the responding learning centers were founded before the 1970s, the vast majority were founded in the past 50 years. More than two-thirds of the centers were founded since 1990.

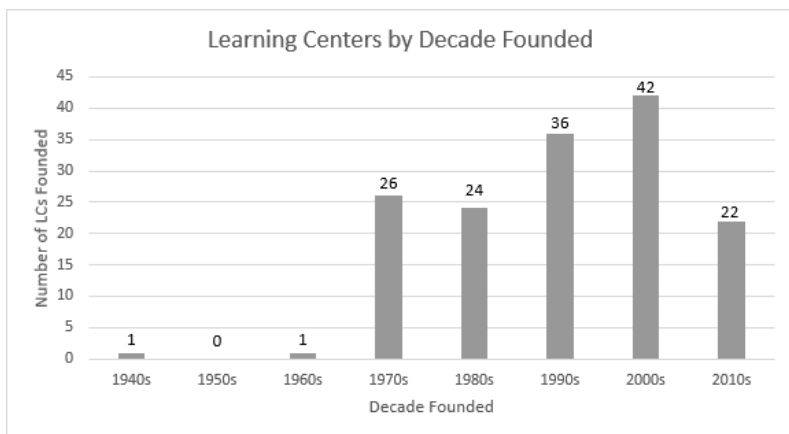


Figure 1. Learning Centers by Decade Founded

### Physical Location and Sizes

The majority of learning centers (n=119) occupy only one type of physical location, however many are now providing services in multiple locations, yet administered as one. The remainder of 150 responses include: 2 locations for 23 centers, 3 locations for 7 centers, 4 locations for 2 centers, and 5 locations for 3 centers. The most common locations for a learning center were the library and classroom buildings (See Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Learning Centers by Physical Location*

Physical Location	Number of Learning Centers
Library	79
Classroom Building	68
Student Center	21
Free-standing Building	19
Residence Hall	9
Other/Additional	59

When asked about square footage, 112 learning centers responded, with responses ranging from 20 sq. ft to 40,000 sq ft. The average square footage was 3,972 and the median was 2,000.

### Visits per year and Students per year

Data for visits and students per year was requested because institutional academic calendars vary (i.e., quarter, semester, etc...).

The average number of visits per year was 21,635 (N=132), ranging from 200 to 245,000. The median number of visits per year was 10,000. The average number of unduplicated students served per year was 2,853 (N=116), ranging from 175 to 18,000. The median number of unduplicated students served per year was 1,500.

**Table 4**

*Average Visits and unduplicated Students per Year by Institution Type*

Institution Type	Average Visits per Year	Average Unduplicated Students per year
2yr	25,659	2,591
4yr Comp	14,295	2,912
4yr Liberal Arts	6,183	1,107
4yr Research	36,522	4,998
Other	10,680	1,233
All Institution Types	21,635	2,853

**Types of Services**

Tutoring and Study Skills Workshops were the most common services provided. Details about “Other” services included services for veterans/service members, disciplinary services, study abroad, study areas, and conditional admissions programs.

**Table 5**

*Learning Centers by Type of Service Provided*

Service	Number of Learning Centers	Percentage of respondents (N=155)
Tutoring	152	98.1%
Study Skills or Learning Strategy workshops/courses	127	81.9%
Supplemental Instruction (SI)	89	57.4%
Services for students on academic probation/warning	89	57.4%
Services for students with disabilities	77	49.7%
Computer lab	74	47.7%
Organization of Study Groups	73	47.1%

Academic Coaching/Counseling	73	47.1%
Services for student-athletes	58	37.4%
Peer Mentoring Programs	46	29.7%
Academic Advising	34	21.9%
Assessment/Placement Testing of Students	28	18.1%
First Year Experience Programs	25	16.1%
Summer Bridge Programs	24	15.5%
Trio Programs	14	9.0%
Personal Counseling	9	5.8%
Financial Aid Counseling	7	4.5%
Career Services	7	4.5%
Other	50	32.3%

## Types of Tutoring

**Table 6**

*Learning Centers by Type of Tutoring Offered*

Type of Tutoring	Number of Learning Centers	Percentage of respondents (N=151)
Drop in	126	83.4%
Small Group Tutoring	122	80.8%
One-on-one appointments	120	79.5%
SI	81	53.6%
Online Asynchronous	54	35.8%
Online Synchronous	49	32.5%
Other	16	10.6%

Other types of tutoring included by respondents include exam reviews, weekly course reviews, course-embedded tutoring, and large-group drop-in tutoring.

While sessions ranged from 15 to 270 minutes in length, the average session length was 52 minutes (N=144). The mode (most often length) was 60 minutes.

**Other Tutoring Programs**

Two thirds of the respondents (N=151) indicated that there was at least one other tutoring or learning center at their institution. These include population specific tutoring programs such as athletics, TRiO, 1st generation student centers, multicultural student centers, disability centers, and programs for provisionally admitted students. The other major sources of additional tutoring programs were departmental specific programs.

**Institutional Affiliation**

Learning centers are located within a variety of organizational areas at an institution. Of the 150 responses, learning centers were affiliated with Academic Affairs 60% of the time, Student Affairs 23%, and with a specific academic division, college, or schools 14%, and the remaining 3% in other locations such as Enrollment Services or a joint academic and student affairs department.

**Funding**

Most of the learning centers are funded as a budget line item. Other sources of funding include: Federal Work-Study dollars; donations and support from other colleges, departments and/or Student Government; and private (1-time) donations.

**Table 7**  
*Learning Centers by Funding Source*

Funding Source	Number of Learning Centers	Percentage of respondents (N=148)
Budget Line Item	138	93%
Grant Money	32	22%
Student Fees	25	17%
Endowment	12	8%
Other	24	16%

## Staffing

Table 8 shows who the learning centers utilize to serve as tutors, SI leaders, and peer mentors.

**Table 8**

*Tutor, SI Leader and Peer Mentor Descriptive Statistics*

		Respondents	Ave	Min	Max
Tutors/SI Leaders	Undergraduate	145	51.6	0	400
	Graduate	120	3.9	0	65
	Faculty	109	5.9	0	467
	Professional	117	5.7	0	75
	Volunteer	105	1.2	0	35
Peer Mentors	Others	10	36.6	16	60
		125	4.7	0	85

Regarding professional and administrative staffing, the most common model included one full-time professional employee and one full-time administrative employee.

**Table 9**

*Professional and Administrative Staffing Descriptive Statistics*

		Respondents	Ave	Min	Max
Professional (Non-Tutor) employees	Full-Time	146	3.6	0	28
	Part-time	124	3.8	0	86
Administrative employees	Full-Time	139	1.4	0	21
	Part-time	118	0.5	0	7
Student Workers	Graduate Assistants	119	1.7	0	15
	Undergraduates	143	10.5	0	145

## Compensation

Hourly wages were the most common compensation for tutors. Other types of compensation included volunteer/internship credit hours and a dedicated quiet study area.

**Table 10**

*Learning Centers by Type of Compensation offered to Tutors*

Type of Compensation	Number of Learning Centers	Percentage of respondents (N=151)
Hourly Wage	145	96.0%
Work Study	71	47.0%
Stipend	14	9.3%
Course Credit	10	6.6%
Tuition Remission	9	6.0%
Course Release	2	1.3%
Other	5	3.3%

**Directors**

There were 147 responses identifying they were directors of Learning Centers. Most directors (n=138) enjoy a full-time position. Part-time positions were spread across large 4-year institutions (n=3), small 2-year institutions (n=1), and very large 2-year institutions (N=2).

Part time positions were 6-30 hours per week. Notably, one of the part-time respondents held a faculty position with 6 hours of release time per week to work in the center but the actual hours the director spends in the center is approximately 35 hours/week. Over half of the director positions are devoted entirely to the learning center (see Table 11).

**Table 11**

*Learning Centers by Percentage of Position Devoted to Learning Center*

Percent of position in LC	N	Percentage
1-25	6	4%
26-50	14	10%
51-75	23	16%
76-95	22	16%
100	75	54%

Of the 147 responses, the majority of directors reported having a 12 month contract (80%), with 8% having 11 month, 9% having 10 month, and 3% having 9 month contracts. The average length of time in the position was 6.85 years with a maximum of 28 years, as well as an average of 18 years in higher education and a maximum of 43 years. Concerning the nature of appointments, 86% were considered professional staff, 5% tenured faculty, 1% faculty in tenure track, and 8% non-tenure track faculty. Additionally, highest level of degree held was reported as 5% Bachelor, 65% Master, 27% Doctorate, and 3% other including law degrees and ABD. Almost half of learning center directors have degrees in Education (see table 12).

**Table 12**  
*Learning Centers by Director's Degree Field*

Director's Degree Field	Number of Learning Centers	Percentage of Respondents (N=130)
Education	62	47%
Liberal Arts and Humanities	40	30%
Social Science	12	9%
Counseling	6	5%
Natural Sciences	6	5%
Management	2	2%
Law	2	2%

## **Trends and Growth**

Common themes emerged concerning growth and trends. Respondents were primarily concerned with continuing budget restrictions. Many also saw a growing connection between assessment, accountability and funding. The need to keep up with changes in technology was another major trend.

Finally, respondents were observing changes in the students they serve. Many noted that the changes in developmental education occurring across the country affected what services they need to provide. Many also noted the increased numbers of students with

disabilities and underprepared students arriving at their institutions.

When asked how their learning center will change over the next five years, many saw growth regarding the number of students served and new modalities to serve them. Many also identify a move towards a “commons approach” with multiple services being joined which caused some of the respondents to fear such moves would put their learning centers at risk because of duplicate services.

### References

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